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THE DISCOVERY OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN BY VASCO NUNEZ DE BALBOA.

THE adventures of the early explorers of the American continent furnished to the wonder-lovers of the sixteenth century the same rich delights which the knights and dames of an earlier age found in the exploits of Charlemagne and his peers, of Roland at Roncesvalles, and of Amadis de Gaul. Even the old black letter men who pored in solitude over the accounts of the Argonautic expedition, or the adventurous rambles of Perseus, and believed them all, because it was impossible to prove them false, began to doubt as they heard of the dazzling conquests of the Spaniards, whether the classic age of marvel was yet passed. There certainly never was an age in which rude physical courage and energy gave more striking manifestations of their power, and we have now only to lament that the sense of justice and humanity was not at that time so fully developed as to make them subservient to the wants and happiness of mankind, instead of pandering to lust and covetousness.

In the character of Columbus himself, and in all his acts, there is everything to admire. There was in him that devout simplicity, that humble aspiration, that chastened and refined enthusiasm which animated the artists of his day, and made art not so much a profession as a religious faith. He followed out his convictions with an earnestness and single-mindedness, which were in themselves the best guarantees of success, and sought his reward, not so much in personal aggrandisement, as in the advance of science and the diffusion of knowledge. It might have been said of him with no less truth than of our own great hero, that no woman ever feared to mention his name with honour, and no priest to couple it with prayer.

The men who followed in his footsteps were of a widely different stamp. They speedily took from the stories of new world exploration all the show of noble daring and disinterestedness which gave to the earlier voyages an air of epic grandeur, and changed an illiad of sailors into a series of marauding expeditions, full of romance, valour, and audacity to be sure, but tainted by the constant overflow of all the blackest passions of the human heart.

Spain, at the period of the discovery of America, was filled with young daring and impoverished adventurers, mostly of noble families, in whom a love of broils had been nurtured by the war which raged with the Moors of Granada during the whole of the reigns of Ferdinand and Isabella, and to whom pride and custom left no means of retrieving their fortunes, and winning honourable fame, except the profession of arms. The expulsion of the Moors threw all these idle upon the country, and the discovery of America found them fretting against their forced inactivity like an imprisoned lion against the bars of his cage.

A Spanish colony existed in 1510 at St. Domingo, under the government of Admiral Diego Columbus, and from it bands of adventurers issued at various times, for the purpose of exploring the interior of the southern continent, and in the hope of meeting with rich booty. One of the most daring, most romantic, and most unfortunate, was Alonso de Ojeda, a model of fiery courage, untempered by one grain of prudence or caution. During one of his visits to St. Domingo, when full of hope and enthusiasm, but sorely pressed for money, he so dazzled the imagination of a rich lawyer, whom he there met, named Martin Fernandez de Enciso, by his glowing pictures of the riches and fertility of the forests of the continent, that he induced him to invest all his riches in fitting out an expedition, with a part of which Ojeda started directly himself, leaving Enciso to follow with the remainder. Ojeda passed through wondrous perils and hair breadth escapes, to find himself, at the close of his strange eventful history, a ruined and broken-hearted man. It is not our purpose, however, to follow him through his romantic career. Our attention must for the present be confined to Enciso and his party, who prepared to follow his confederate with supplies and reinforcements. When he was on the eve

of sailing, all the gentlemen of "doubtful reputation," debtors, swindlers, and other unfortunates, with whom St. Domingo already abounded, became most anxious to accompany him, finding, naturally enough, the vicinity of their creditors highly disagreeable. The latter, however, getting wind of their intention, placed a close watch around the coast and harbour, and obtained an armed vessel from the admiral to escort Enciso's ship out of the port. The would-be emigrants were thus grievously disappointed, but one among them was determined not to be baffled, and we all know that where there is a will there is a way. He concealed himself in a cask, which he caused to be carried on board, as if containing provisions for the voyage, and when the vessel was fairly at sea, he emerged from his hiding-place, and presented himself to the astonished gaze of the commander on deck. The latter was at first in a great rage, at the deception which had been practised upon him, fumed, shouted, and swore roundly that he would place the delinquent on shore on the first inhabited island they met with. The intruder, however, was a fine tall muscular fellow, bronzed by the sun, and well inured to fatigue, and there was a look of quiet daring in his eye, which made him, after all, no very unwelcome visitant to the leader of an expedition directing its course to unknown and barbarous shores.

The name of this new recruit was Vasco Nunez de Balboa. He was a native of Xeres de los Caballeros, and of poor but noble family. He had been brought up, according to the custom of the time, in the service of a nobleman named Don Pedro Puerto Carrero, and had enlisted amongst the adventurers who accompanied Rodrigo de Bastides in his expedition to America. Peter Martyr, in his Latin Decades, speaks of him as an "egregius degladiator," a skilful swordsman, or, as some say, an adroit fencing-master; and gives him the character of a soldier of fortune, of loose, prodigal habits. He had for a short time taken up his abode at Hispaniola, and had commenced to cultivate a small farm at Salvaterra; but he soon found himself involved in debt, and at last made his escape in the way we have described. During the remainder of the voyage we hear nothing of him; but no sooner had the armament reached its destination, than his courage and capacity displayed themselves.

Enciso had expected to find Ojeda comfortably settled in a strong fort called San Sebastian, surrounded by treasure and lordly abundance; but alas! instead of this, he found but a howling wilderness, the fort a heap of blackened ruins, and its garrison gone he knew not whither. The Indians were timid or hostile, and, to add to his misfortunes, his vessel was wrecked on the coast, and the crew escaped with difficulty. His supplies were soon exhausted, but where to seek assistance he knew not. In this dilemma, Vasco Nunez, the contraband passenger, came to his aid, by informing him that he had formerly sailed along the coast, and knew an Indian village on the banks of the river called Darien, where they would find plenty of everything they needed, gold and food. They followed his guidance, attacked the village successfully, and found an immense booty. The soldiers were delighted; their hardships were over. Enciso here fixed his head-quarters, assuming the title of alcalde mayor, and Vasco Nunez became a general favourite. But the first edict of the alcalde forbidding all trafficking with the natives for gold on private account, upon pain of death, produced general dissatisfaction. It was in accordance with the king's command, to be sure; but men who had risked their all for gold were not to be balked in the acquisition of it by any squeamish loyalty. They murmured openly, and Vasco Nunez encouraged them in their murmurings; and at last a powerful party, of which he was the head, denied Enciso's right to the position he had assumed, and at last formally deposed him from his authority. In his place, Vasco Nunez and one Zemudio were elected joint alcaldes, and a cavalier named Valdivia, regidor. Nunez was now in his element, in

the prime of life, tall, well-formed, and vigorous, and with an open prepossessing countenance, and in possession of an authority all but supreme. He determined to carry matters to the extreme against Enciso, and therefore summoned him before him to answer the charge of usurping the powers of *alcalde mayor*. As might have been expected, he was found guilty, thrown into prison, and his property confiscated. By the intercessions of his friends he was soon liberated, and permitted to return to Spain. As Nunez knew well, however, that he would plead his cause ably before the king, he sent one of his own friends to argue his own cause against him.

Vasco Nunez now (1511) strained every nerve to distinguish himself in his new government, and thus remove any unfavourable impression regarding his proceedings which the home government might be disposed to entertain. His first object was to collect as large a quantity of gold as possible, and for this purpose he instantly sent out exploring parties into the neighbourhood. One of these, under the command of the famous Pizarro, then a subordinate in the army, met with a severe reverse in a conflict with the Indians. Nunez, at last, set out himself at the head of 120 men, and attacked a place named Coyba, surprised the cacique, made him prisoner, and plundered his village. The unfortunate chief finding himself a captive in the hands of his enemies, implored mercy, offered to supply the Spanish troops with provisions, and to reveal the riches of the land, and as a pledge of his good faith gave his daughter in marriage to Nunez. The prayers and tears of the cacique might doubtless have knocked in vain at the door of the conqueror's stern heart, but the beauty of the Indian maiden quite vanquished him. He released the prisoners, entered into an offensive alliance with her father, and on receiving a supply of provisions started on his march for the chastisement of some of his father-in-law's enemies. From some of them whom he awed into subjection, and from whom he extorted vast sums of gold, he first heard of a great ocean which lay beyond the mountains to the westward. He continued his explorations for some time with varied success, suffering terrible hardships from cold, hunger, fatigue, and watching; nightly harassed by vigilant enemies, and daily worn out by toilsome marches through trackless forests, and across precipitous and dreary hills. In the midst of such difficulties any but "men of iron," who carried with them nothing of civilisation but its ingenuity in destruction, and whose sole hopes lay in their valour, must have sunk down in despair. But such spirits as Vasco Nunez had at command were daunted by no perils, and dismayed by no difficulties, and he was advancing from conquest to conquest, when news arrived from Spain, that for the moment paralysed and unnerved him, and seemed to blast every one of his hopes for ever. One of his private friends informed him by letter that Enciso had lodged his complaint before the king, and after a long trial had obtained the condemnation and deposition of Nunez, who was at the same time sentenced to pay costs and damages, and that he would in all probability be shortly summoned to Madrid to answer other criminal charges in person. This was a heavy blow, and Nunez's ancient firmness seemed to have deserted him. But it was only for the moment. He had as yet received no official intimation of the result of the trial, and until that arrived, he was still his own master, and might still hope for extrication from his perils. His only safety lay in the achievement of some striking exploit which should atone for all his past offences, and restore him to the king's favour. Now or never! The choice lay between glory and a prison, and there was little time for deliberation. A thousand men, it is true, would have been necessary for such an expedition as he contemplated, but where were they? Vasco Nunez was not the man to be balked by unpropitious circumstances; so when a thousand men were not to be had, he determined that one-fifth of that number should do their work. Of the hardy and reckless crew that surrounded him, he chose 150 of the most daring, and devoted, to whom danger, mystery, unknown and frightful hazards, were sweet as women's kisses, and arming them with swords, targets,

crossbows, and arquebusses, informed them that he was to put their and his fortunes on the cast, and set forward in search of the great unknown ocean beyond the hills, accompanied by a large number of bloodhounds, long trained in Indian warfare.

On the 6th of September, 1513, he took solemn leave of the main body of his forces, and after a prayer, suitable to the occasion, struck into the wilderness with his little band of explorers. For ten days they pursued their way amidst almost incredible hardships and fatigues, suffering intensely from hunger, torn by briars in the thickets, half drowned in the swamps, and daily exposed to the fierce attacks of the Indians, who hung on the march in great numbers, and every hour threatened to overwhelm them. Often the Spaniards had to fight their way for miles in the face of the most fearful odds, but their unconquerable valour, their fire-arms and bloodhounds, generally brought them unscathed through every encounter. At last they arrived, laden with booty, at the foot of the great mountain range, beyond which they were told lay the object of their search, and after resting here for one night, Vasco Nunez prepared to ascend in the morning early, to get the first glimpse of his new discovery. But of all his followers sixty-seven only were strong enough to climb the mountain to gaze upon the object of their toils and struggles.

When the day dawned, they set forth from the Indian village, in which they had passed the night, and by ten o'clock, by a toilsome ascent, through thick forests, they emerged upon the bare and rugged region, which lay below the summit. The Indian guides here pointed to a craggy eminence, from which the first view of the ocean might be obtained. Nunez commanded his men to halt, and now proceeded alone. With a throbbing heart he ascended the bare mountain top. The crisis of his fate was come, and he trembled with anxiety. At last he stood upon the summit and gazed eagerly westward. Below him lay a vast chaos of rock and wood, and pampa, and roaring torrent, and, oh, joy unutterable! away in the distance, the long sought ocean danced and glittered in the morning sun.

"Ades, O desiderabilis,
Quem petiebamus in tenebris!"

Vasco Nunez fell on his knees on the spot, and poured forth his heart in thanksgiving to God, who had so abundantly blessed him. Here was the great Indian Sea, which washed the isles of spices and of gems, where the golden dreams of the old world poets were living, palpable realities, and Vasco Nunez was the happy discoverer. His followers soon joined him, swore to follow him to death, and having chanted a *Te Deum* on the spot, they made preparations for descending to the sea coast. The way was long and difficult, and the tribes through whose territory they had to pass were fierce and hostile, and before he reached the end of the journey, Nunez was forced to leave behind most of his men to take rest after their fatigues, and advanced himself at the head of a small band of the bravest and best armed, accompanied by the cacique who reigned over the adjoining district, and some of his chosen warriors. The thick forests which covered the mountains descended to the very margin of the sea, surrounding and overshadowing the wide and beautiful bays which penetrated far into the land. The whole coast, as far as the eye could reach, was perfectly wild, the sea without a sail, and both seemed never to have been under the dominion of civilized man. They had arrived on the borders of one of those vast bays to which he gave the name of St. Michael, the saint on whose day it was discovered. The tide was out, and so gradual was the incline of the strand, that the water was full half a league distant. Nunez seated himself under the shade of a tree until it should come in. At last it came dashing on to his very feet with great impetuosity. He started up, seized a banner on which were printed a Virgin and child, and under them the arms of Castile and Leon. Then drawing his sword he advanced into the sea until the water was up to his knees, and waving the standard, exclaimed with a loud voice,—

"Long live the high and mighty monarchs, Don Ferdi-

nand and Donna Juanna, sovereigns of Castile, of Leon, and of Arragon, in whose name, and for the royal crown of Castile, I take real, and corporal, and actual possession of these seas, and lands, and coasts, and ports, and islands of the south, and all thereunto annexed, and of the kingdoms and provinces which do or may appertain to them, in whatever manner, and by whatever right or title, ancient or modern, in times past, present, or to come, without any contradiction; and if other prince or captain, christian or infidel, or of any law, sect, or condition whatsoever, shall pretend any right to these islands, or seas, I am ready and prepared to maintain and defend them in the name of the Castilian sovereigns, present and future, whose is the empire and dominion over these Indian seas, islands, and terra firma, northern and southern, with all their seas, both at the arctic and antarctic poles, on either side of the equinoctial line, whether within or without the tropics of cancer and capricorn, both now and in all times, as long as the world endures, and until the final day of judgment of all mankind!" His followers hailed this pompous declaration with loud acclamations, and declared themselves ready to defend his claims against all comers, and advancing to the brink, having tasted the water, and found it to be indeed salt, they returned thanks to God once more. When these ceremonies were concluded Vasco Nunez drew his dagger, and cut three crosses on trees in the neighbourhood, in honour of the Three Persons of the Trinity, and his example was followed by many of his soldiers.

The after history of Nunez was melancholy in the extreme. After going through unparalleled hardships and dangers in exploring the coast of the Pacific, he once more crossed the isthmus, and returned to Darien laden with treasure. During his absence a new governor had arrived, who was animated by the bitterest enmity against him, and although the magnitude of his discoveries had restored him to favour at Madrid, his foes in the colony were numerous and determined. A trumped up charge of treason was brought against him, and he was arrested in the midst of his glory and prosperity; tried hastily and condemned, and executed in the square of Acla, amidst the tears and lamentations of the soldiers and people. He died as he had lived, with undaunted courage, in the forty-second year of his age, and in the prime and vigour of his life, and Spain long mourned him as one of the bravest, the most intrepid, and most enterprising of her great captains.

HISTORY OF SUGAR.

I was led to investigate the history of sugar by a casual remark of the late Sir Joseph Banks, one day at breakfast. I forget now how the conversation arose, but he inquired whether I had met with any of the remains of the sugar-cane in Sicily, mentioning that it had been previously produced in the island of Crete, but the sugar manufactured in that island was more crystallised than ours, and was called, from the place where it was boiled, sugar of Candi, otherwise sugar Candy, and it seems never to have been prepared better there than in that form.

It is certain, however, that in the year 1148 considerable quantities of the article were produced in the island of Sicily, and the Venetians traded in it; but I have met with no evidence to support the "*Essai de l'Histoire du Commerce*," in which the author says that the Saracens brought the sugar-cane from India to Sicily.

"The ancient Greeks and Romans," says Dr. William Douglas, "used honey only for sweetening." And Paulus Egineta, who calls it cane-honey, says it came originally from China, by the East Indies and Arabia, into Europe. Salmasius says, however, that it had been used in Arabia 900 years before. But it is certain that sugar was only used in syrups, conserves, and such like Arabian medicinal compositions, when it was first introduced into the west of Europe; but Mr. Wotton, in his "*Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning*," says that the sugar-cane was not anciently un-

known, since it grows naturally in Arabia and Indostan; but so little was the old world acquainted with its delicious juice, that "some of the ablest men," says he, "doubted whether it were a dew like manna, or the juice of the plant itself." It is, however, certain that raw sugar was used in Europe before the discovery of America.

About the year 1419, the Portuguese planted the Island of Madeira with sugar-canes from Sicily; and Giovanni Batero, in an English translation of his book, in 1606, on the "*Causes of the Magnificence and Grandeur of Cities*," mentions the excellence of the sugar-cane of Madeira, for which it was transported to the West Indies; and there can be no doubt that Madeira was one of the first islands of the Atlantic Ocean in which this important article was earliest manufactured.

It was about this time (1503) that the art of refining sugar was discovered by a Venetian, who is said to have realised 100,000 crowns by the invention. Our ancestors made use of it as it came in juice from the canes, but most commonly used honey in preference.

From the Brazils and the Canaries sugar-canes were brought and planted in the Island of Hispaniola, and in the same year sugar was brought from the Brazils into Europe. The commodity was then very dear, and used only on rare occasions, honey being till then the general ingredient for sweetening of meats and drinks.

When sugar was introduced into this country first is doubtful; but in 1526 it was imported from St. Lucar, in Spain, by certain merchants of Bristol, who brought the article which had been imported there from the Canary Islands.

In the year 1641 the sugar-cane was imported from the Brazils into Barbadoes, and being found to thrive, sugar-mills were established. A Colonel James Drax, who began the cultivation with about £300, declared that he would never return to England till he had made £10,000 a-year; and Colonel Thomas Modyford was still higher in his expectations.

It was from the island of Barbadoes that the slave trade began. The first planters finding such immense profits, induced the merchants at home to send ships with assorted cargoes for the product of the island, but they found it impossible to manage the cultivation of sugar by white people in so hot a climate. The example of the Portuguese gave birth to the negro slave trade, and it flourished till abolished by Act of Parliament; but in that age it was a most flourishing business, and the ports of London and Bristol had the main supply. Barbadoes, in the year 1569, attained its utmost pitch of prosperity. In a pamphlet entitled "*Trade Revived*," it is spoken of as "having given to many men of low degree vast fortunes, equal to noblemen; that upwards of a hundred sail of ships there yearly find employment, by carrying goods and passengers thither, and bringing thence other commodities, whereby seamen are bred and custom increased, our commodities vended, and many thousands employed therein, and in refining our sugar at home, which we formerly had from other countries."

In 1670 our sugar colonies drew the means of support from what were then our North American colonies, particularly New York, Pennsylvania, and the Jerseys; and the first time that sugar was made subject to taxation at home was in 1685. Like other merchandise, it was previously subject to a five per cent poundage.

In 1739 the importation of sugar from the West India Islands was so great, that there was a relaxation of our colonial policy towards them; and they were permitted to carry their sugar to any part south of Cape Finisterre, without being obliged to land them first in Great Britain. From this time sugar has continued to increase, and it is needless to pursue its history further; it was then a great article of trade, and, as an ingredient, the consumption has been continually increasing. Whether the cultivation has exceeded the wants of the commercial world, or that the new colonies have been found more fertile than the old, I cannot pretend to say; but at this moment the proprietors of the sugar estates are suffering at all hands, and their greatest calamity is not the emancipation of their slaves.—*From Mr. Galt's Literary Autobiography.*



THE DISCOVERY OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN.

VASCO NÚÑEZ DE BALBOA TAKING POSSESSION OF THE "SEAS, LANDS, AND COASTS, AND PORTS AND ISLANDS OF THE SOUTH,"
IN THE NAME OF THE KING AND QUEEN OF CASTILE.